MOSES

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR HERE AND NOW

IQBAL J. UNUS

Leadership is a complex subject and has been written about extensively. This short book approaches leadership from a faith perspective, drawing upon the Islamic scriptural narration about Moses. His life and his response to God's command to liberate the Israelites has significant lessons in leadership, as applicable to our times as they were to his.

This work is a revised and expanded 2nd edition of Moses on leadership: A Qur'anic Narration of which Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, chair of the Fiqh (Jurisprudence) Council of North America and former president of Islamic Society of North America said: "You have done an amazing work in relating Prophet Moses' story to our time and drawing many valuable and global principles of good leadership. This short book is a must read for all people, specially the leaders and those who aspire to be leaders."

IQBAL J. UNUS is Board Chair of The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA) and Board Member of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). He is the editor of Muslim American Life: Reflections and Perspectives (University of Indianapolis), co-author of How Millennials Can Lead Us Out of the Mess We're In: a Jew, a Muslim and a Christian Share Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses (Rowman & Littlefield), and author of A Caliph for Our Time: How Abu Bakr's Inaugural Address Can Transform Leadership Today.

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Second Edition (Revised and Expanded)

Iqbal J. Unus

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Second Edition (Revised and Expanded)
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DEDICATION

To the leadership in all of us.

Honorifics

All religious traditions recommend the use of honorifics when speaking about God, His messengers, and companions of the messengers. In the Islamic tradition, the following honorifics are commonly used for names in this book:

God
Glory be to Allah
Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus
Peace be upon him
Muhammad
Blessings of Allah be on him and peace
Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali
May Allah be pleased with him

Readers may wish to use the appropriate honorific when encountering a name for the first time, or whenever they wish to do so.

Also, within passages quoted from the Qur'an, Moses is named Musa and Aaron is named Harun (with u pronounced as oo).

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PREFACE

This short book cannot claim to be a guide to the complex human behavior that constitutes leadership. Far from it, it is simply intended to draw our attention to the historical and ever so ageless wisdom that is divinely inspired and communicated to mankind through the prophets and messengers of the Divine Creator. The Prophet Moses (may peace be upon him) is one of those messengers who are distinguished by the way both the Old Testament and the Qur'an chronicling his life and his response to events that have influenced the religious practices of all three Abrahamic faiths.

This short book draws on a specific phase in the life of Moses, as narrated in the Qur'an. It makes no attempt to compare this narration with Biblical versions of the same.

Leadership is not only a complex phenomenon, but it also encompasses a wide spectrum of the leader's personality traits and characteristics that help influence the individual and collective behavior of people who are led. Among these is the ability to communicate, to function as a team, and to delegate. The Qur'anic narration of this phase of Moses' life provides us an opportunity to examine and ponder on these aspects of effective and purposeful leadership.

Several books address the life of Moses and lessons that may be learned from it. As may be expected, the Qur'anic narration that is the subject of this short book is open to multiple interpretations, and a vast spectrum of meanings is embedded in the selected text. This work is narrowly focused on a few specific aspects of leadership, without any attempt to touch upon the various in-depth interpretations and meanings that more extensive and scholarly works offer. Nor does this work address the vast expanse of ideas in the selected aspects of leadership - just a few that may not have been explored elsewhere.

There is much else in the life of Moses that offers moral, spiritual and practical guidance to aspiring and proven leaders and managers. Scriptural texts are best studied seeking answers to questions because their fundamental purpose is to guide the seeker. Leaders and managers would be well advised to study the life of Moses with such questions in mind as may relate to their own experiences and

needs. They will not be disappointed with the wisdom and insight they gain to guide them toward fulfillment and success in their personal and professional lives.

On a side note, those interested in the Biblical version of this subject may find David Baron's *Moses on Management: 50 Leadership Lessons from the Greatest Manager of All Time* useful. Those interested in the impact of Moses on American life may find Bruce Feiler's *America's Prophet: How the Story of Moses Shaped America* a worthwhile reading. This short book does not draw upon either of these works.

Lastly, since the Qur'anic narration about Moses and Aaron addresses Moses as Musa (pronounced Moosa) and Aaron as Harun (pronounced Haroon), I have chosen to keep the Qur'anic names instead of Biblical names in translations of Qur'anic verses, just as I have chosen to keep Allah as God's name.

What is New in the Second Edition

This revised second edition of the book, with a new title, includes a chapter on the life of Moses as recorded in the Qur'an. The Qur'an – primarily a scripture of guidance and not of history – records the life of Moses in several different chapters and places and in forms and extent that are relevant to the guidance, reminders or admonition appropriate to the wider context of its message. The first chapter in this book gathers almost all such references to the life of Moses and seeks to construct an

integrated view of the life that Moses lived. This may help the reader to better relate the chapters that follow to the circumstances and historical context of the life of Moses and his followers.

To explore the life of Moses in greater depth, one may refer to several other sources. These include the hadith and *tafseer* works, the Bible and biblical scholarship, as well as historical and archeological research. Countless books and numerous works of art and film – many taking liberties with established facts – offer a wider understanding of the life and time of Moses.

However, this short book draws its material exclusively from the Qur'an. It does not refer to any other source, such as those mentioned above. The Qur'anic narrative covers the essentials and teaches the lessons that are pertinent to the subject of this short work, which does not claim to be a work of in-depth scholarship or academic rigor. It is only intended to help the general reader to appreciate and learn from the Qur'anic narrative of Moses as a leader for his times as well as ours. It does not seek to discuss or explain how leadership works in varied life situations. Its focus is limited to demonstrating that contemporary concepts and practices in the art of leadership have roots in the conduct of the Messengers of God instructed and inspired by the Divine Being Himself.

As stated above, the Qur'an is the only source for this work. However, it is of interest to refer to the Bible for narration corresponding to the key encounter between Moses and God. While the Qur'an depicts Moses as one who responds submissively to God's command and seeks His help to accomplish what God commands, the Bible portrays Moses as doing so rather reluctantly and only after several back-and-forth exchanges. In this vein, Kaltner and Mirza state:

> "The result is a completely different portrait of Moses/Musa in the two texts – the resistant protester of the Bible has been replaced with a receptive partner in the Qur'an.[1]"

The limited focus of this work is significant. Many novices or even experts in leadership positions are unable to relate what they learn or experience as leaders to the foundational concepts and ideas that are rooted in Divine Guidance delivered centuries ago. In societies and systems that are anchored in a secular approach to public life, such practitioners of leadership internalize, and comply with, an unmotivated approach to their profession and their exertion. Unable to see or comprehend the

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[1] *The Bible and the Quran: Biblical Figures in the Islamic Tradition*, John Kaltner and Younus Y. Mirza, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, New York, 2018

roots of contemporary concepts in ancient scriptures that they honor and obey, they cannot commit their all-inclusive spiritual self to the tasks and challenges of leadership. Should they choose to engage the energy and promise of a wholistic approach - combining motivation inspired by everlasting scriptural teachings and a skillset grounded in contemporary learning – they can propel themselves to gratifying success.

This short work aims to help leaders and leaders-to-be to enhance their skillset and enrich their efforts by reaching into the scriptural origins of their professional competence. That, and no more, is the purpose of what follows in these pages.[2]

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[2] Just as the nonviolent civil rights strategy espoused by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. or the nonviolent *satyagraha* movement of Mahatma Gandhi does not indicate that their admirers were committed to their theological frameworks. So may be the case of those who choose to learn from the leadership conduct of Moses inspired by Divine Guidance.

"Granted is your prayer, O Musa!"

"*Go You to Pharaoh, for he had indeed transgressed all bounds.*" (Musa) said: "*O my Lord! Expand me my breast; Ease my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech. So, they may understand what I say: And give me a Minister from my family, Harun, my brother; Add to my strength through him, And make him share my task: That we may celebrate Your praise without stint, And remember You without stint: For You are He that ever watches us.*" (Allah) said: "*Granted is your prayer, O Musa!*"

(Qur'an: TaHa, 20:24-36)

Moses

Leadership Lessons for Here and Now

1 - THE LIFE MOSES LIVED

Moses lived a life that at first sight may seem paradoxical – a baby barely saved from certain death, raised as a prince, one who commits a crime, raised to the status of a Messenger, opposed by his own people, saved from an invading army, leader of a wandering people, and at the end, unable to reach the promised land. Yet, it was a divinely ordained life, full of lessons to be learnt and examples to be followed.

Among all Messengers of God, Moses is the one most frequently mentioned in the Qur'an, in some 200 verses. In this chapter, we will let a selection from among these verses speak to us about the life of Moses, with subheadings as minor intrusions, to connect

passages in the Qur'anic narration. We will bring together selected (not all) passages from various chapters to construct a continuous narrative from the beginning - a Pharaoh's decree that all newborn males of Israelis be killed – to the end of Moses' travails in the Sinai.

All footnotes refer to Muhammad Asad's translation of the meaning of the Qur'an, quoted as number of chapter and verse separated by a colon, such as 28:3.

From here on, the Qur'an speaks.

Baby Moses becomes a Prince

> We [now] convey unto thee some of the story of Moses and Pharaoh, setting forth the truth for [the benefit of] people who will believe.[3]
>
> And, lo, Moses spoke [thus] unto his people: "Remember the blessings which God bestowed upon you when He saved you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with cruel suffering, and slaughtered your sons,

[3] 28:3

and spared [only] your women -which was an awesome trial from your Sustainer."[4]

And so, [when he was born,] We inspired [thus] the mother of Moses: Suckle him [for a time], and then, when thou hast cause to fear for him, cast him into the river, and have no fear and do not grieve - for We shall restore him to thee, and shall make him one of Our message-bearers![5]

On the morrow, however, an aching void grew up in the heart of the mother of Moses, and she would indeed have disclosed all about him had We not endowed her heart with enough strength to keep alive her faith [in Our promise]. And so, she said to his sister, "Follow him" - and [the girl] watched him from afar, while they [who had taken him in] were not aware of it. And We had prevented from him [all] wet nurses before, so she said, "Shall I direct you to a household that will be responsible for him for you while they are to him [for his upbringing] sincere?" And thus, We restored him to his mother, so that her eye might he gladdened, and that she might grieve no longer, and

[4] 14:6
[5] 28:7

that she might know that God's promise always comes true - even though most of them know it not! Now when [Moses] reached full manhood and had become mature [of mind], We bestowed upon him the ability to judge [between right and wrong] as well as [innate] knowledge: for thus do We reward the doers of good.[6]

And [one day] he entered the city at a time when [most of] its people were [resting in their houses,] unaware of what was going on [in the streets]; and there he encountered two men fighting with one another - one of his own people, and the other of his enemies. And the one who belonged to his own people cried out to him for help against him who was of his enemies - whereupon Moses struck him down with his fist, and [thus] brought about his end. [But then] he said [to himself]: "This is of Satan's doing! Verily, he is an open foe, leading [man] astray!"[7]

Said he: "O my Sustainer! [I vow] by all the blessings which Thou hast bestowed on me:

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[6] 28:10-14
[7] 28:15

Nevermore shall I aid such as are lost in sin!"[8]

And next morning, he found himself in the city, looking fearfully about him, when lo, the one who had sought his help the day before [once again] cried out to him [for help whereupon] Moses said unto him: "Behold, thou art indeed, most clearly, deeply in the wrong! But then as soon as he was about to lay violent hands on the man who was their [common] enemy, the latter exclaimed: "O Moses, dost thou intend to slay me as thou didst slay another man yesterday? Thy sole aim is to become a tyrant in this land, for thou dost not care to be of those who would set things to rights!" And [then and there] a man came running from the farthermost end of the city and said: "O Moses! Behold, the great ones [of the kingdom] are deliberating upon thy case with a view to killing thee! Begone, then: verily, I am of those who wish thee well!" So, he went forth from thence, looking fearfully about him, and prayed: "O my Sustainer! Save me from all evildoing folk!"[9]

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[8] 28:17
[9] 28:18-21

Moses becomes a shepherd

And as he made his way towards Midian, he said, "I trust my Lord will guide me to the right way." When he arrived at the well of Midian, he found a group of people watering 'their herds'. Apart from them, he noticed two women holding back 'their herd'. He asked 'them', "What is the problem?" They replied, "We cannot water 'our animals' until the 'other' shepherds are done, for our father is a very old man." So, he watered [their flock] for them: and when he withdrew into the shade and prayed: "O my Sustainer! Verily, in dire need am I of any good which Thou mayest bestow upon me!" [Shortly] afterwards, one of the two [maidens] approached him, walking shyly, and said: "Behold, my father invites thee, so that he might duly reward thee for thy having watered [our flock] for us." And as soon as [Moses] came unto him and told him the story [of his life], he said: "Have no fear! Thou art now safe from those evildoing folk!"[10]

[After some time, the father] said: "Behold, I

[10] 28:22-25

am willing to let thee wed one of these two daughters of mine on the understanding that thou wilt remain eight years in my service; and if thou shouldst complete ten [years], that would be [an act of grace] from thee, for I do not want to impose any hardship on thee: [on the contrary,] thou wilt find me, if God so wills, righteous in all my dealings." Answered [Moses]: "Thus shall it be between me and thee! Whichever of the two terms I fulfill, let there be no ill will against me. And God be witness to all that we say!"[11](28:27-28)

Moses is elevated as Messenger

And when Moses had fulfilled his term and was wandering with his family [in the desert], he perceived a fire on the slope of Mount Sinai; [and so] he said to his family: "Wait here. Behold, I perceive a fire [far away]; perhaps I may bring you from there some tiding, or [at least] a burning brand from the fire, so that you might warm yourselves." But when he came close to it, a call was sounded from the right-side bank of the valley, out of the tree [burning] on blessed

[11] 28:27-28

ground: "O Moses! Verily, I am God, the Sustainer of all the worlds!"[12]

Verily, I am thy Sustainer! Take off, then, thy sandals! Behold, thou art in the twice hallowed valley, ...[13]

'Now, what is this in thy right hand, O Moses?' He answered: 'It is my staff; I lean on it; and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep; and [many] other uses have I for it.'[14]

[And God spoke thus:] "O Moses! Verily I alone am God, the Almighty, the Wise!" [And then He said:] "Now throw down thy staff!" But when he saw it move rapidly, as if it were a serpent, he drew back [in terror], and did not [dare to] return. [And God spoke to him again:] "O Moses! Fear not - for, behold, no fear needs the message-bearers have in My Presence," ...[15]

And when Moses came [to Mount Sinai] at the time set by Us, and his Sustainer spoke unto him, he said: "O my Sustainer! Show [Thyself] unto me, so that I might behold

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[12] 28:29-30
[13] 20:12
[14] 20:17-18
[15] 27:9-10

Thee!" Said [God]: "Never canst thou see Me. However, behold this mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then - only then - wilt thou see Me." And as soon as his Sustainer revealed His glory to the mountain, He caused it to crumble to dust; and Moses fell down in a swoon. And when he came to himself, he said: "Limitless art Thou in Thy glory! Unto Thee do I turn in repentance; and I shall [always] be the first to believe in Thee!"[16]

Said [God]: "O Moses! Behold, I have raised thee above all people by virtue of the messages which I have entrusted to thee, and by virtue of My speaking [unto thee]: hold fast, therefore, unto what I have vouchsafed thee, and be among the grateful!" And We ordained for him in the tablets [of the Law] all manner of admonition, clearly spelling out everything. And [We said:] "Hold fast unto them with [all thy] strength and bid thy people to hold fast to their most goodly rules. I will show you the way the iniquitous shall go."[17]

And We gave Moses the Scripture and made

[16] 7:143
[17] 7:144-145

it a guide for the Children of Israel, 'stating: ' "Do not take besides Me any other Trustee of Affairs,"[18]

And [thus], indeed, have We sent forth Moses with Our messages [and this Our command]: "Lead thy people out of the depths of darkness into the light, and remind them of the Days of God!" Verily, in this [reminder] there are messages indeed for all who are wholly patient in adversity and deeply grateful [to God].[19]

And, indeed, We gave unto Moses nine clear messages....[20]

But whenever good fortune alighted upon them, they would say, "This is [but] our due"; and whenever affliction befell them, they would blame their evil fortune on Moses and those who followed him. Oh, verily, their [evil] fortune had been decreed by God-but most of them knew it not.[21]

And [thus] did We inspire Moses and his brother: "Set aside for your people some

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[18] 17:2
[19] 14:5
[20] 17:101
[21] 7:131

houses in the city, and [tell them], 'Turn your houses into places of worship, and be constant in prayer!' And give thou [O Moses] the glad tiding [of God's succor] to all believers."[22]

Moses confronts the Pharaoh

Thus, indeed, have We sent Moses with Our messages unto Pharaoh and his great ones; and he said: "Behold, I am an apostle of the Sustainer of all the worlds!"[23]

But as soon as Moses came unto them with Our clear messages [Pharaoh and his great ones] said: "All this is nothing, but spellbinding eloquence devised [by man]: and never did we hear [the like of] this, [nor has it ever been heard of] in the time of our forebears of old!"[24]

And Moses said: "O Pharaoh! Verily, I am an apostle from the Sustainer of all the worlds,"[25]

[But when Moses had delivered his message, Pharaoh] said: "Did we not bring thee

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[22] 10:87
[23] 43:46
[24] 28:36
[25] 7:104

up among us when thou wert a child? And didst thou not spend among us years of thy [later] life?"[26]

Replied [Moses]: "I committed it while I was still going astray;"[27]

[And Moses] continued: "[He is] your Sustainer, [too,] as well as the Sustainer of your forefathers of old!"[28]

He said: "Has thou come to drive us out of our land by thy sorcery, O Moses?"[29]

And Moses replied: "My Sustainer knows best as to who comes with guidance from Him, and to whom the future belongs! Verily, never will evildoers attain to a happy state!"[30]

They replied: "Have you come to turn us away from the way of our forefathers that the two of you might become supreme in the land? We shall never accept what the two of you say."[31]

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[26] 26:18
[27] 26:20
[28] 26:26
[29] 20:57
[30] 28:37
[31] 10:78

Said [Pharaoh]: "If thou hast come with a sign, produce it-if thou art a man of truth!"[32]

And they said [unto Moses]: "Whatever sign thou mayest produce before us in order to cast a spell upon us thereby, we shall not believe thee!"[33]

Answered [Moses]: "Your tryst shall be the day of the Festival; and let the people assemble when the sun is risen high." Thereupon Pharaoh withdrew [with his counsellors] and decided upon the scheme which he would pursue; and then he came [to the tryst].[34]

They answered: "Let him and his brother wait awhile, and send unto all cities heralds..."[35]

Moses warned the magicians, "Woe to you! Do not fabricate a lie against Allah, or He will wipe you out with a torment. Whoever fabricates 'lies' is bound to fail."[36]

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[32] 7:106
[33] 7:132
[34] 20:59-60
[35] 7:111
[36] 20:61

They said: "O Moses! Either thou shalt throw [thy staff first], or we shall [be the first to] throw." He answered: "You throw [first]." And when they threw down [their staffs], they cast a spell upon the people's eyes, and struck them with awe, and produced mighty sorcery. And [then] We inspired Moses, "Throw down thy staff!" -and lo! it swallowed up all their deceptions...[37]

Said Moses: "Do you speak thus of the truth after it has been brought to you? Can this be sorcery? But sorcerers can never come to a happy end!"[38] (10:77)

And when they threw down [their staffs and cast a spell upon the people's eyes], Moses said unto them: "What you have contrived is [but] sorcery which, verily, God will bring to naught! Verily, God does not further the works of spreaders of corruption."[39](10:81)

Answered [Moses]: 'Thou knowest well that none but the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth has bestowed these [miraculous signs] from on high, as a means of insight [for thee]; and, verily, O Pharaoh, [since

[37] 7:115-117
[38] 10:77
[39] 10:81

thou hast chosen to reject them;] I think that thou art utterly lost!'[40]

Moses leads the Israelites across the Red Sea

And, indeed, [a time came when] We thus inspired Moses: "Go forth with My servants by night and strike out for them a dry path through the sea; [and] fear not of being overtaken, and dread not [the sea]."[41]

...and as soon as the two hosts came in sight of one another, the followers of Moses exclaimed: "Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!"[42]

Thereupon We inspired Moses thus: "Strike the sea with thy staff!"- whereupon it parted, and each part appeared like a mountain vast.[43]

...and We saved Moses and all who were with him, and then We caused the others to drown.[44]

And, lo, Moses said unto his people: "O my people! Remember the blessings which God

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[40] 17:102
[41] 20:77
[42] 26:61
[43] 26:63
[44] 26:65-66

bestowed upon you when he raised up prophets among you, and made you your own masters, and granted unto you [favors] such as He had not granted to anyone else in the world."[45]

[And] Moses said unto his people: "Turn unto God for aid and have patience in adversity. Verily, all the earth belongs to God: He gives it as a heritage - to such as He wills of His servants; and the future belongs to the God-conscious!"[46]

Now when Moses spoke to his people, [it was this same truth that he had in mind:] "O my people! Why do you cause me grief, the while you know that I am an apostle of God sent unto you?" And so, when they swerved from the right way, God let their hearts swerve from the truth: for God does not bestow His guidance upon iniquitous folk.[47]

And We divided them into twelve tribes, [or] communities. And when his people asked Moses for water, We inspired him, "Strike the rock with thy staff!" -whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it, so that

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[45] 5:20
[46] 7:128
[47] 6:15

all the people knew whence to drink., And We caused the clouds to comfort them with their shade, and We sent down unto them manna and quails, [saying:] "Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance." And [by all their sinning] they did no harm unto Us - but [only] against their own selves did they sin.[48]

And We brought the children of Israel across the sea; and thereupon they came upon people who were devoted to the worship of some idols of theirs. Said [the children of Israel]: "O Moses, set up for us a god even as they have gods!" He replied: "Verily, you are people without any awareness [of right and wrong]!"[49]

And in his absence, the people of Moses took to worshipping the effigy of a calf [made] of their ornaments, which gave forth a lowing sound. Did they not see that it could neither speak unto them nor guide them in any way? [And yet] they took to worshipping it, for they were evildoers:[50]

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[48] 7:160
[49] 7:138
[50] 7:148

[But] they answered: "By no means shall we cease to worship it until Moses comes back to us!" And indeed, there came unto you Moses with all evidence of the truth - and thereupon. in his absence, you took to worshipping the (golden] calf, and acted wickedly.[51]

... and when Moses said unto his people: "O my people! Verily, you have sinned against yourselves by worshipping the calf; turn then, in repentance to your Maker, and mortify yourselves; this will be the best for you in your Maker's sight". And thereupon He accepted your repentance: for, behold, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace.[52]

They answered: 'O Moses! Behold, ferocious people - dwell in that land, and we will surely not enter it unless they depart therefrom; but if they depart therefrom, then, behold, we will enter it.'[53]

[But] they said: 'O Moses! Behold, never shall we enter that [land] so long as those others are in it. Go forth, then, thou and thy

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[51] 20:91-92
[52] 2:54
[53] 5:22

Sustainer, and fight, both of you! We, behold, shall remain here!' Prayed [Moses]: "O my Sustainer! Of none am I master but of myself and my brother [Aaron]: draw Thou, then, a dividing-line between us and these iniquitous folk!"[54]

And [remember] when you said: "O Moses, indeed we cannot endure, but one kind of food; pray, then, to thy Sustainer that He bring forth for us aught of what grows from the earth - of its herbs, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, its onions." Said [Moses]: "Would you take a lesser thing in exchange for what is [so much] better? Go back in shame to Egypt, and then you can have what you are asking for!" And so, ignominy and humiliation overshadowed them, and they earned the burden of God's condemnation: all this, because they persisted in denying the truth of God's messages and in slaying the prophets against all right: all this, because they rebelled [against God], and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right.[55]

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[54] 5:24-25
[55] 2:61

Moses beseeches God

But then, [so they told Moses], the Samaritan had produced for them [out of the molten gold] the effigy of a calf, which made a lowing sound; and thereupon they said [to one another], "This is your deity, and the deity of Moses - but he has forgotten [his past]"[56]

And [remember] when you said, "O Moses, indeed we shall not believe thee until we see God face to face!'" - whereupon the thunderbolt of punishment overtook you before your very eyes.[57]

[And God said:] "Now, what has caused thee, O Moses, to leave thy people behind in so great a haste? He answered: "They are treading in my footsteps while I have hastened unto Thee, O my Sustainer, so that Thou might be well-pleased [with me]."[58] (20:83-84)

And Moses chose out of his people seventy men to come [and pray for forgiveness] at a time set by Us. Then, when violent trembling seized them, he prayed: "O my

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[56] 20:88
[57] 2:55
[58] 20:83-84

> Sustainer! Hadst Thou so willed, Thou wouldst have destroyed them ere this, and me [with them]. Wilt Thou destroy us for what the weak-minded among us have done? [All] this is but a trial from Thee, whereby Thou allowest to go astray whom Thou willest, and guidest aright whom Thou willest. Thou art near unto us: grant us, then, forgiveness and have mercy on us - for Thou art the best of all forgivers!"[59]

This was the life that Moses lived – a baby in danger who became a prince, a fugitive, a shepherd, a Messenger, a leader, and one whose goal to reach the Promised Land remained unreachable. His early life, extraordinary as it was, prepared him for what was to come. The magnificence of the Egyptian palace, the banality of a street-level dispute, the hardship of a lonely journey to Madyan, the simplicity of shepherding for his father-in-law, and the longing for a return to home on his journey across the desert, each and all contributed to a temperament both ready for, and receptive to, the unique tests and trials of leading a broken people out of servitude when so commanded by God.

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[59] 7:155

Whether we view Moses as a prince who became a shepherd, or a shepherd who was once a prince, we learn that leadership, granted to Moses by God, or contracted to us by an electorate, is best shaped by a wide range of human experiences. The closer leaders are to such experiences, the more successful they are likely to be empathetic to those who follow them and whose interests leaders are chosen to serve.

In the chapters that follow we will examine aspects of the life of Moses as a leader, seeking timeless and tested lessons in leadership, communication, teambuilding, and delegation.

REFLECTION

There were two major transitions in Moses' life – from prosperity as a prince to adversity as one in need in a strange land, and then from individually shepherding sheep to leading a half million Israelites to the Promised Land.

Think of more recent or contemporary leaders (not Prophets or Messengers) who may have experienced similar transitions – in either direction. Where did they start and where did they end?

2 - MOSES THE LEADER

Now that we have some familiarity with the life of Moses as narrated by the Qur'an in its own words, we will address the central theme of this book – the leadership of Moses.

For the purpose of deriving lessons from the Qur'anic narration concerning Moses and his brother Aaron, we focus our attention on *ayah* (verse) 24 to verse 36 in *surah* (chapter) TaHa. Each verse highlights one or more aspects of their role and actions as appropriate to the Qur'anic message at that point. When we study and explore this revealed knowledge about the two prophets, we uncover profound lessons, including key principles of communication, teamwork and delegation, all vital elements of effective leadership.

In Surah TaHa, God commands Moses to confront Pharaoh, the powerful and oppressive ruler of the time, saying:

> "Go you to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds."[60]

Elsewhere, God reminds us of the charge he had given to Moses.

> Hence, [remember how it was] when thy Sustainer summoned Moses: "Go unto those evil doing people."[61]

At this stage, God's command was directed to Moses alone as an individual. Moses recognizes this to be a great challenge and a formidable task to accomplish. He would face a ruler whom God had already determined to be evil and transgressing all bounds. He must have felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the job assigned to him, but refusal was not option. Moses must obey.

Moses' response to this assignment provides many lessons in leadership. These lessons lie at the root of important modern concepts related to communication, teamwork and delegation. The language we use may be contemporary, but the kernel of these

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[60] 20:24
[61] 26:10

concepts is firmly embodied in Moses' response to God's directive to "Go."

In response to God's command, Moses first asks for God's help to enhance his capabilities and enable him to succeed in completing the assigned task. His plea for help represents the hallmark of a great leader, full of humility and dependent on His Lord for success.

> (Musa) said: "O my Lord! Expand for me my breast; Ease my task for me;"[62]

The leader's willingness and ability to seek and ask for help is crucial to the success of any mission. Unwillingness or inability to seek help often results from one's own pride or from ambiguity about the authority giving the charge. Here Moses is neither proud nor does he have any doubt in the unbounded capability of God to help. So, he is forthright in asking God to make his task easier, both by enhancing his competencies ("expand my breast") as well as by intervening to smooth his path ("ease my task") toward mission success.

Next, Moses takes an inventory of skills required for the job, assesses his own abilities, and recognizes his limitations. It is critical for the success of a mission that leaders understand what skills are needed and identifies their own strengths and weaknesses in the context of

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[62] 20:25-26

what is needed. Confident leaders do not shy away from confronting their limitations. Poor leaders tend to hide their limitations.

Immediately, Moses recognizes that his communication skills are not as effective as they should be. After all, he was being commanded to argue with the mightiest human being in the land. So, Moses asks God to remove the difficulty he has in speaking effectively.

> "And remove the impediment from my speech."[63]

Elsewhere, the Qur'an refers to Moses' request as follows:

> "My breast will be straightened. And my speech may not go (smoothly): so, send unto Harun..."[64]

In stating his requests to God, Moses reveals his pragmatic approach and his ability to assess potential problems. First he demonstrates an awareness of his own limitations - an exemplary quality for a good leader. With the difficulties and limitations in mind, he proposes a solution: form a team with his brother Aaron to do the job, with the teammate

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[63] 20:27
[64] 26:13

complementing the leader's skills and strengthening his weaknesses, especially in the matter of speaking effectively.

Moses also exemplifies the ideal candidate to lead an assignment, one who can be expected to perform with confidence and achieve with certainty of success. A critical episode in his life illustrates that the person to be so chosen should have two major characteristics: competence and trustworthiness. These are the qualities that were apparent in Moses when the elderly man whose daughters he helped at the water well during his journey in the land of Madyan hired him.

> Said one of the (damsels): "O my (dear) father! Engage him on wages: truly the best of men for you to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty."[65]

While many other characteristics may be relevant to the task at hand, strength, in its broadest sense, and trustworthiness, with all is its associations, are indeed what qualifies leaders to lead.

Strength relates to competence and skills needed to perform the task at hand. Strength may also mean physical prowess in some situations; in other circumstances strength may mean intellectual ability or technical proficiency.

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[65] 28:26

Similarly, trustworthiness includes a broad spectrum of qualities that leaders and employers seek, including, for example, honesty, loyalty, and truthfulness. Often trustworthiness may be more desirable than strength, because while competence and skills may be acquired through learning and training, honesty and truthfulness are generally part of one's character and inbred through good upbringing.

Even though there are many lessons in the life story of Moses, the short chapters that follow focus on only three aspects of his leadership: communication, teambuilding, and delegation.

The Golden Rule

The leader's willingness and ability to seek and ask for help is crucial to the success of any mission.

COMMUNICATION

TEAMBUILDING

DELEGATION

REFLECTION

Once Moses was convinced it was really God speaking to him, he accepted God's charge without hesitation. Did Moses wonder why God chose Him? Was he surprised? Was he afraid this may be too much for him to accomplish? The Qur'an is silent on answers to such questions. All we are told is that Moses was concerned that he may not be fully equipped for the task, recognizing that the task was one of persuasion.

Great achievers of all times in all human endeavors must have that ability to focus on that one skill – above all others - that will make or break their effort to succeed.

Who among contemporary leaders in any human enterprise models such an attitude?

3 - MOSES THE COMMUNICATOR

Moses makes the request to "remove the impediment from my speech" for a reason, which illustrates a profound principle - in fact, the essence - of communication, His reason is:

"So they may understand what I say:"[66]

Moses does not ask for removing the impediment in his speech so that he can speak better or more impressively. Instead, he asks God to remove the impediment from his speech so that those who listened to him can

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[66] 20:28

understand him. This is the core of communication, that the receiver of the message should understand the message as it was intended to be understood. Communication takes place, not when the sender sends the message but when the receiver receives it and ascribes meaning to it.

To communicate with desired results, one should not become too absorbed in one's own abilities as speaker or presenter but should focus on the anticipated interpretation and understanding of the message by the intended receiver or receivers. One should seek improvement in one's ability to ensure that the audience can benefit from a clear understanding of the message one intends to convey.

One's ability to communicate also depends on an assessment and appreciation of the audience and their needs. Here Moses knows who the audience will be, the Pharoah and by extension, his courtiers. Moses' goal is not simply to impress them by his eloquence but to effect change through persuasion. He cannot let his limitation to speak clearly risk his ability to convince his formidable audience.

This principle can be extended to other areas of human activity. Any work should be judged not by how well we do it, but how well it benefits those affected by it. In other words, all our actions should be result oriented, and one should, of course, intend the result to be beneficial. The Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

People are dependents of God; the closest to Him are the most useful to His dependents. (Sahih Muslim)

One must prepare for effective communication in advance of the occasion for such communication, as Moses does in this instance.

Further, this principle of communicating to be understood applies to all levels and all categories of communication, from a one-on-one personal talk to a small group discussion, to a major speech addressing a large audience. In each case, communication must have a purpose that is directed to achieving results – persuading, motivating, commanding, or instructing, for example. In this instance, Moses will be seeking compliance of Pharaoh to God's order, so he is focused on making sure that Pharaoh will understand the Divine order Moses was conveying, regardless of how well Moses can articulate it.

One may also note here the characteristics of the audience. God orders Moses to go to Pharaoh because he had "*transgressed all bounds,*" and at the same time specified a way of dealing with this ruler.

> "But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (God)."[67]

[67] 20:24

The lesson here is that both the content of our communication and its medium, the manner of its delivery, should suit the nature, the mood, and the circumstance of the expected receiver of the message. Sometimes the right way to deal with a harsh and unrepentant receiver, such as the Pharaoh, is not to converse in a like manner but in quite the opposite manner, speaking to him "*mildly*" as God advise Moses.

The essence of communication is to get a message across, not to get even.

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Moses communicated with Pharaoh on an individual basis and with the magicians as a group. In each case we find him to be forthright, straightforward, brief and focused. He is not distracted by Pharoah's attempt to denigrate him by bringing up his past upbringing in the palace and his having murdered a man.

It is worth noting that even though Moses had asked for Aaron to be his helper because Aaron was better in speech, Aaron does not speak at all in the Qur'anic narration. Moses overcomes his hesitation when faced with a challenge and speaks eloquently.

Phases of Communication in the Moses-Pharaoh Confrontation

Communication takes place when a **message** that contains **information** is transmitted from a **source** to a **receiver** in an **environment** which suppresses noise and encourages **feedback**.

Background: Pharaoh has been oppressive to the Israelites. God wants to relieve the Israelites from this oppression. God chooses Moses as His agent to accomplish His purpose. Moses confronts Pharaoh. Communication starts.

Message

Moses conveys to Pharaoh what God wants. Release the Israelites from oppression and bondage.

Information

The information contained in the message is that gradually, over the long period of time that Israelites have lived in Egypt, they have become the "other" and various Pharaohs have treated them as slaves, with the Pharoah of Moses' time exceeding in oppression. He has ordered the killing of the firstborn of all Israelites. God is displeased.

Source

Moses is the source that conveys the message from God to Pharaoh, with Aaron at his side, and with God's promise to support him by giving him authority and assistance as needed.

Receiver

Pharaoh is the receiver of God's message, with Moses as the source delegated by God to deliver His message to Pharaoh.

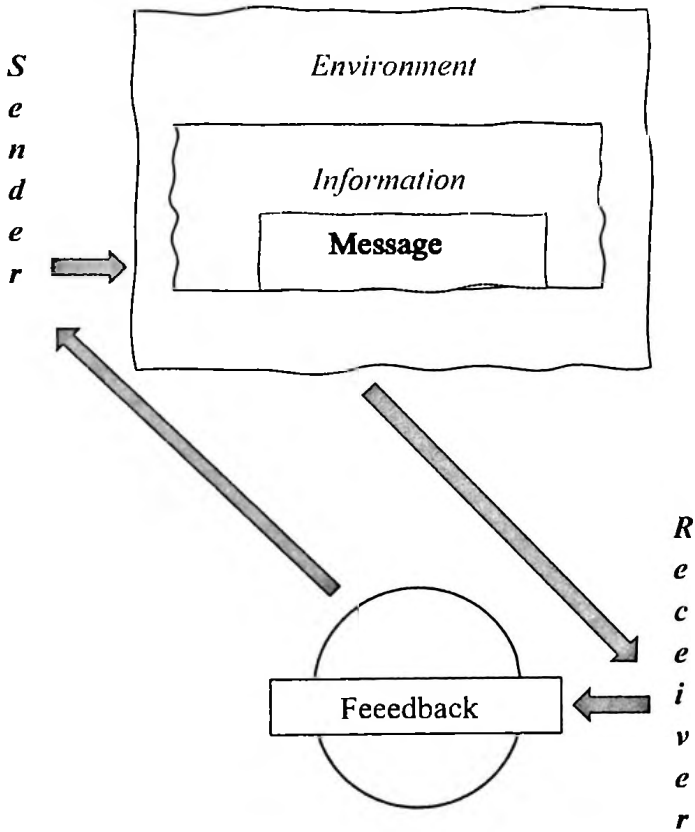
Environment

The physical environment in which Moses, accompanied by Aaron, delivers God's message is Pharoah's court, with courtiers and magicians present. The social environment is the Pharaoh confident in his uncontested power, and Moses reliant on God's promise to help.

Feedback

This environment, with Moses, Pharoah, and magicians present, results in a tryst between Moses and the Magicians to establish whether God's message will be accepted or rejected by Pharaoh. The tryst results in the feedback that Pharoah's magicians profess their belief in the God of Moses and Aaron, while the defeated Pharaoh chooses to remain defiant. Communication comes to an end. Moses awaits God's directive.

Flow of Moses-Pharaoh communication



The Qur'an lays out the hallmarks of effective communication this way: kindness, truthfulness, and verification. Being kind and gentle in all manner of interpersonal interaction is the underlying directive in the Divine Message. God reminds the children of Israel of the solemn pledge He had accepted from them, reminding them of that, among other acts of obedience, "You shall speak unto all people in a kindly way." While encouraging the giving of charity, God also reminds the believers that a "kind word and the veiling of another's want is better than a charitable deed followed by heart." Similarly, God encourages the giving of charity and sharing of sustenance, but if one cannot give because one is oneself in need, believers are advised to "at least speak unto them with gentle speech."[68]

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[68] Mordecai Schreiber, Iqbal Unus, Ian Case Punnett. *How Millennials Can Lead Us Out of the Mess We're In, A Jew, A Muslim, and a Christian share lessons from the life of Moses*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, Pg. 90

The Golden Rule

Communication takes place, not when the sender sends the message but when the receiver receives it, ascribes meaning to it, and understands the message as it was intended to be understood.

Analyzing the Moses-Pharaoh confrontation through the SALAM Model

Moses and Pharaoh are in a state of conflict. The conflict is finally resolved. This conflict and confrontation may be analyzed by using the SALAM model of conflict resolution. [For a detailed description of the SALAM model, refer to the Appendix.]

[Stating-Agreeing-Listening/Learning-Advising-Minimizing Disagreement]

Stating

Moses states his position. God has sent him to lead the Israelites to freedom from the oppression inflicted by Pharaoh. Pharaoh states his position. He does not recognize a god other than himself, nor does he recognize Moses as God's Messenger. So, he will not let the Israelites go.

Agreeing

Pharoah's assertion of his authority does not impress Moses. Moses' display of God-given miraculous signs does not move Pharoah. They both understand and agree that there is a conflict between them, unresolvable by simple give and take.

Listening and Learning

They listen to each other and respond to each other. There is dialogue. There are statements of consequences for not agreeing to what either party wants. Pharaoh

reminds Moses of his upbringing in Pharoah's palace and his suspicion that Moses seeks power in the land. Moses reminds the Pharaoh of God being the supreme power who demands freedom for the Israelites.

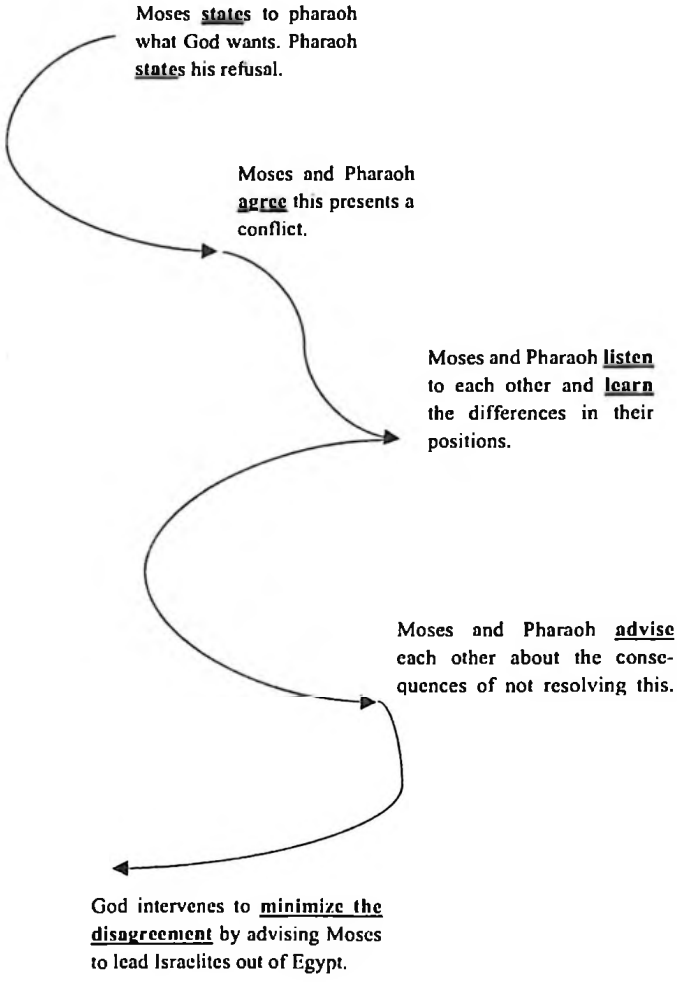
Advising

Moses advises Pharaoh that God will punish him for oppressing the Israelites. Pharaoh advises Musa that his magicians are more skilled than Moses, whom he considers to be a magician.

Minimizing Disagreement

Moses and Pharaoh engage in a competition of magic, which ends with Pharaoh's magicians believing in the God of Moses, and Pharaoh becoming more defiant. At this stage, God instructs Moses to minimize further conflict and disagreement by leaving Egypt with his followers at night. Pharoah's army follows them. God saves the Israelites by parting the sea. Conflict is ended.

Moses-Pharaoh confrontation



REFLECTION

In their mutual communication, Moses had an advantage over Pharoah in that he was speaking for God. Pharoah was speaking for himself. Moses was forthright. Pharaoh was looking for an out. He wanted to go up a tall ladder to see God himself.

Such communication is not uncommon in matters such as, for one example, labor union negotiations with management. Perhaps any negotiation between the powerless and the powerful may mirror the Moses-Pharaoh communication style.

Can we think of other examples of such communication?

The Moses-Pharaoh communication scenario can also be studied as a conflict situation, considering the back-and-forth shown in the SALAM model.

Conflict is a form of communication which begins with opposing points of view, often very distant approaches to solving a problem, that may eventually lead to compromise or divergence.

Conflict is functional when it improves the parties' performance by forcing examination of basic issues and identifying new opportunities. Conflict is dysfunctional when it hinders and prevents the parties' goals from being achieved. Conflict is occasional when it is the exception, not the rule, in the individual's or the parties'

behavior. Conflict is chronic when individuals or parties routinely disagree.

Which type of conflict did Moses and Pharaoh engage in?

4 - MOSES THE TEAMBUILDER

Moses also understands the need for building a team. He recognizes his need to complement his own abilities in order to succeed. This leads to the next part of his response to God's command to confront Pharaoh.

> "And give me a Minister from my family, Harun, my brother;"[69]

Moses wishes to recruit his brother as a team member in order to strengthen his own skills and competencies, and to enhance his own efforts.

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[69] 20:29-30

"Add to my strength through him,"[70]

Adding strength is not only having more energy to do something, but also taking advantage of the synergy in doing it. Synergy makes the work of two halves better than that of one whole (persons or processes or resources).

For the team to be effective, Moses expects his teammate to participate in carrying out the task, and not be a mere bystander.

"And make him share my task:"[71]

Leaders who are unsure of themselves often recruit teammates who are less qualified than them to avoid being challenged in areas of their weaknesses. Effective leaders, however, are confident of themselves and focus their efforts on accomplishing the mission. Hence, they seek people who will complement them capably in areas where they perceive themselves to be weak or lacking. Moses asks for someone he knows to be capable, his own brother Aaron, for specific reasons, not mere familiarity or favor.

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[70] 20:31
[71] 20:32

The Qur'an brings to our attention one important reason why Moses asks God to assign Aaron to help him.

> "And my brother Harun - he is more eloquent in speech than I: so send him with me as a helper, to confirm (and strengthen) me: For I fear they may accuse me of falsehood."[72]

An effective team is characterized by teammates whose skills complement those of the leader as well as of other members of the team. As we saw earlier, Moses fears that his speech might not be adequate for the task at hand; so he asks for someone he considered to be better in that particular skill. This is the hallmark of an effective leader. Further, Moses asserts that the purpose of forming a team was not merely to reduce one's workload, but to get help and strength from one another, as we have noted above. Such a team is directed to a purpose and to meet a challenge, which, in this case, carried the risk of being accused of promoting falsehoods.

A team should have a mission toward which it directs all its efforts. The success of the team is dependent upon the clarity of that mission and upon the degree to which all members are committed to accomplishing it. Moses clarifies his team's mission.

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[72] 28:34

> "That we may celebrate Your praise without stint, and remember You without stint: For You are He that ever watches us."[73]

One must note the relationship between praise (*tasbih*) and remembrance (*zikr*) on the one hand and accomplishing an objective - community building, for example – on the other. The mission to which Moses and Aaron were directed was the release of the Israelites from the clutches of Pharaoh. To them, that mission encompassed the praise and remembrance of God, for all action carried out to establish His Will would indeed amount to His praise and remembrance. Praising God and remembering Him establish the moral bearings that crystallize our mission and move us to accomplish it. On the other hand, exerting ourselves to accomplishing our purpose and mission within God's commandments and boundaries is an indisputable way to praise and remember Him.

Every mission, however mundane it may sound, must have a greater purpose.

Mission orientation is crucial for the success of the mission. The leader and followers both must expend their energies in actions and activities that are in harmony with their mission and avoid actions and

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[73] 20:33-35

activities that will detract them. Moses and Aaron were both focused on their mission in whatever they said or did.

It is very important to note that, having granted the request of Moses to assign Aaron as his teammate, God stresses that relationship in numerous verses in the Qur'an. The team of Moses and Aaron is presented to us as one unit, addressed by God as such and recognized by others as such, for example:

> Then after them sent We Musa and Harun to Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our Signs...[74]
>
> We inspired Musa and his brother with this Message:...[75]

God said:

> "Accepted is your prayer (O Musa and Harun)! ..."[76]
>
> Again, (of old,) We bestowed Our favor on Musa and Harun .....'Peace and salutation to Moses and Aaron.'[77]

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[74] 10:75
[75] 10:87
[76] 10:89
[77] 37:114-120

Similarly, the Qur'an uses the dual form to refer to the two prophets in Surah TaHa, Ayahs 42-49, again highlighting the fact that they were a team.

Moses and Aaron also acted as a team. The words "*They said*" and "*We fear*" in the verse that follows, indicate a process of active consultation between the two of them. In an effective team, each teammate plays a part. The leader's job is to determine which teammate is suited to play which part and when.

> They (Musa and Harun) said: "Our Lord! We fear lest he hasten with insolence against us, or lest he transgress all bounds."[78]

It is important to recognize that Aaron was a significant part of the team, not merely an attendant to Moses. Pharaoh recognized this fact; the Qur'an tells us.

> (When this message was delivered, Pharaoh) said: "Who then, O Musa, is the Lord of you two?"[79]

The sorcerers in the court also referred, not to the Lord of Moses alone, but to the Lord of Moses and Aaron, recognizing the latter as a significant partner of the former.

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[78] 20:45
[79] 20:49

Then did the sorcerers fall down, prostrate in adoration, saying: "We believe in the Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Musa and Harun."[80] ...

And so it happened, and down fell the sorcerers, prostrating themselves in adoration, [and] exclaimed: "We have come to believe in the Sustainer of Moses and Aaron!"[81]

Thus, indeed, did We bestow Our favor upon Moses and Aaron...[82]

... Peace be upon Moses and Aaron![83]

... the Sustainer of Moses and Aaron![84]

And, indeed, [long before Muhammad] We vouchsafed revelation unto Moses, and appointed his brother Aaron to help him to bear his burden;[85] ... and, indeed, We vouchsafed unto Moses and Aaron [Our revelation as] the standard by which to discern the true from the false, and as a [guiding] light and a reminder for the God-

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[80] 26:46-48
[81] 20:70
[82] 37:114
[83] 37:120
[84] 26:48
[85] 25:35

conscious.[86]

As pointed out before, the Qur'anic narration does not include any incidence of Aaron speaking in the court of Pharaoh, even though Aaron was clearly part of the team and was selected because he was "*more eloquent in speech than I*", as Moses said. What is clear is that the team of Moses and Aaron had a leader – Moses – who, benefiting from the capability and strength of his teammate, exercised leadership, as a team leader should.

The effectiveness of a team is dependent on the role of teammates just as much as it does on their leader. Aaron was an effective teammate for Moses. He played his part, but he let the leader lead.

God established the legitimacy of Moses' request - and approach - by granting what he had requested.

"Granted is your prayer, O Musa!"[87]

The Qur'an also refers to the acceptance of Moses' request elsewhere.

(Before this), We sent Musa the Book, and appointed his brother Harun with him as Minister;[88]

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[86] 21:45
[87] 20:36
[88] 25:35

God's response to Moses' appeal in the affirmative also indicates that Moses' approach is right – assess your shortcomings, appeal to a higher authority for help, seek to build a team, and internalize the mission. It is an approach that contemporary leaders can emulate with confidence.

REFLECTION

Moses built a team with Aaron as his teammate. The fact that Aaron does not speak in Pharaoh's court should not detract us from the fact that, as the Qur'an asserts, Aaron was a prominent part of this team. In dysfunctional teams, team members sometimes overstep their roles and confuse them with the role of the leader. In functional teams, members counsel the leader, play their assigned roles, act as partners in all actions, as the Qur'an asserts, but let the leader lead the team. Aaron played his role perfectly.

From sports to politics, contemporary teams can succeed if they internalize the Moses-Aaron example.

The Golden Rule

An effective team is characterized by teammates whose skills complement those of the leader as well as of other members of the team.

5 - MOSES THE DELEGATOR

When God summoned Moses to His presence, and Moses had to leave his people for forty days, he put them under the supervision of Aaron. He delegated the leadership of the community and the management of its affairs to his teammate. In doing so, Moses defined the delegated task in broad terms as follows:

> And [then] We appointed for Moses thirty nights [on Mount Sinai]; and We added to them ten, whereby the term of forty nights set by his Sustainer was fulfilled. And Moses said unto his brother Aaron: "Take thou my place among my people; and act righteously

> and follow not the path of the spreaders of corruption."[89]

Moses illustrated three important aspects of effective delegation in this case.

First, he delegated broadly but clearly by charging Aaron to act for him amongst his people.

Second, he clarified his expectation - the intended objective - by asking Aaron to do right.

Third, he placed appropriate limits on the delegated authority by asking Aaron not to follow the way of those who do mischief.

Thus, delegation, from this perspective, consists of defining (a) what the task is, (b) what should be the end result, and (c) what are the boundaries within which the task should be performed, and the result accomplished? The interaction between the one delegating (Moses) and the one who is delegated (Aaron) is circumscribed by three factors that are often neglected in the process of delegation – responsibility, authority, and priority.

Responsibility: When Moses returned to his people and found that Aaron had been unable to prevent them from being misled by Samiri, he was upset.

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[89] 7:142

... and when We appointed for Moses forty nights [on Mount Sinai], and in his absence you took to worshipping the [golden] calf, and thus became evildoers:[90]

Thereupon Moses returned to his people full of wrath and sorrow, [and] exclaimed: "O my people! Did not your Sustainer hold out [many] a goodly promise to you? Did, then, [the fulfilment of] this promise seem to you too long in coming? Or are you, perchance, determined to see your Sustainer's condemnation fall upon you, and so you broke your promise to me?"[91]

But then, [so they told Moses], the Samaritan had produced for them [out of the molten gold] the effigy of a calf, which made a lowing sound; and thereupon they said [to one another], "This is your deity, and the deity of Moses - but he has forgotten [his past]"[92].

And when Moses returned to his people, full of wrath and sorrow, he exclaimed: "Vile is the course which you have followed in my absence! Have you forsaken your Sustainer's commandment?" And he threw down the

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[90] 2:51
[91] 20:86
[92] 20:88

> tablets [of the Law], and seized his brother's head, dragging him towards himself. Cried Aaron: "O my mother's son! Behold, the people brought me low and almost slew me: so let not mine enemies rejoice at my affliction, and count me not among the evildoing folk!"[93]

Moses held Aaron accountable but assumed responsibility himself, illustrating one of the most basic rules of delegation, that *one cannot delegate responsibility; one can only delegate authority.*

> [And now that he had come back, Moses] said: "O Aaron! What has prevented thee when thou didst see that they had gone astray,"[94]
>
> Answered [Aaron]: "O my mother's son! Seize me not by my beard, nor by my head! Behold, I was afraid lest [on thy return] thou say, 'Thou hast caused a split among the children of Israel, and hast paid no heed to my bidding!'"[95]
>
> Musa prayed: "O my Lord! Forgive me and my brother! Admit us to Your mercy! For

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[93] 7:150
[94] 20:92
[95] 20:94

> You are the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!"[96]

Moses asked for forgiveness for himself - for getting angry, and for being unable to fulfill his responsibility - as well as forgiveness for his brother - for his seeming failure in his delegated task, which was "*Do right...*". He asked for forgiveness for himself *first*, which speaks to his consciousness of his own role as the team leader, and the one responsible. As an effective leader, Moses went further and identified himself with his people and their role in this situation.

> And when Moses' wrath as stilled, he took up the tablets, in the writing whereof there was guidance and grace for all who stood in awe of their Sustainer. He prayed: "O my Lord! If it had been Your Will, You could have destroyed, long before, both them and me: would You destroy us for the deeds of the foolish ones among us? This is no more than Your trial: by it You cause whom You will stray, and You lead whom you will into the right path..."[97]

Authority: God illustrates here another principle of delegation - that, one to whom a task is delegated must

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[96] 7:151
[97] 7:154-155

be given sufficient authority and resources to carry it out - when He says:

> Then We sent Musa and his brother Harun, with Our Signs and authority manifest,...[98]
>
> And in [the story of Pharaoh and] Moses, too, [We left the same message] when We sent him unto Pharaoh with [Our] manifest authority[99]
>
> Thus, indeed, did We send Moses with Our messages and a manifest authority [from Us][100]

As in the verses above, so in the verses below, God refers to the two prophets together and underscores two additional principles of delegation. These are: those delegated a task must be supported (*We are with you*), and they must be given a hearing and feedback as necessary (*will listen [to your call]*).

> God said: "By no means! Proceed then both of you, with Our Signs; We are with you, and will listen (to your call)." So go forth, both of you, to Pharaoh, and say: "We have

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[98] 23:45
[99] 51:38
[100] 40:23

> been sent by the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds."[101]
>
> He said: "We will certainly strengthen your arm through your brother, and invest you both with authority, so they shall not be able to touch you: with Our Signs shall you triumph - you two as well as those who follow you."[102]

Priority: When Moses was away to meet God, Samiri caused a rebellion among the people against the legitimately delegated leadership of Aaron and misled them into deviating from the worship of God to the worship of a calf. When Moses returned to his people and found them misled, he asked Aaron what prevented him from following his orders when he saw his people doing wrong. After asking him not to be angry with him, (Aaron) replied:

> ".. Truly I feared lest you should say, 'You have caused a division among the Children of Israel, and you did not respect my word!' "[103]

The environment Aaron faced, when Moses had gone away, was not the same as when Moses was

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[101] 26:15-16
[102] 28:35
[103] 20:94

personally in charge. We see in this exchange between the two brothers and prophets that their priorities differed. The priority of Aaron was to maintain unity among the Children of Israel. The priority of Moses was higher - to maintain the purity of worship among the people.

This exchange points to the fact that a hierarchy of priorities may be at play in delegation. Both the team leader and the teammate(s) must be cognizant of the presence and influence of such priorities.

To ensure effective delegation, a responsible leader provides a clear description of the assignment and its bounds, allocates necessary resources and authority, and offers sufficient freedom to achieve results.

There is one more message in this narration. When Moses returned, he did not rush to condemn anyone. He even gave Samiri, whose guilt was established beyond any doubt, an opportunity to explain his action before arriving at the conclusion of expelling him.

> (Musa) said: "What then is your case. O Samiri?"[104]

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[104] 20:95

Such should be the exercise of fairness and justice, even when the conclusion may seem to be obvious. As Schreiber, et al. Point out:

> This is the hallmark of fairness and justice, hearing out both sides and giving them an opportunity to explain their actions, even if the guilt of one side or the other seems to be established beyond doubt, as was the case of Samiri. The Qur'an advises believers to be "ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice." Neither prejudgment nor bias, nor even enmity, should prevent a leader from rendering justice in any dispute or conflict.[105]

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[105] Mordecai Schreiber, Iqbal Unus, Ian Case Punnett. *How Millennials Can Lead Us Out of the Mess We're In, A Jew, A Muslim, and a Christian share lessons from the life of Moses*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, Pg. 114

REFLECTION

Moses delegated his authority to Aaron. The Israelites accepted Aaron's delegated leadership, until the calf incident.

Delegated leadership sometimes faces challenges because it does not come with the charisma of the delegating leader. What could Moses have done to firm up Aaron's leadership in the face of Samiri's rebellion?

Success of delegated leadership also depends on the group's culture. If that culture is oriented to "hero worship," it tends to devalue delegated leadership.

The Golden Rule

You can delegate authority.

You cannot delegate responsibility.

CONCLUSION

> [God] answered: "Accepted is this your prayer! Continue, then, both of you, steadfastly on the right way, and follow not the path of those who have no knowledge [of right and wrong]."[106]

The story of Moses and Aaron played out on a historical stage that was undoubtedly different from that in modern life. In contemporary social organizations, from the family to the nation state, new modes of

[106] 10:89

thinking of, and relating to, one another have led to new ways of leading people and managing organizational enterprises. Yet at the core, human instincts and behavior, ingenuity and initiative, and the struggle to discover the right course of action, all remain rooted in the immutable nature of the human person. That is why divinely inspired guidance is always contemporary and modern.

For people of faith, with their belief system rooted in a divine scripture, leadership lessons from the life of Moses will deepen their understanding of contemporary concepts in personal and organizational behavior. In a manner of speaking, people of faith are better able to internalize contemporary theories and models when they can relate them to their spiritual and moral underpinnings.

In saying "Accepted is this your prayer!" God confirms that Moses was on the right track when Moses laid out his plan to respond to God's command.

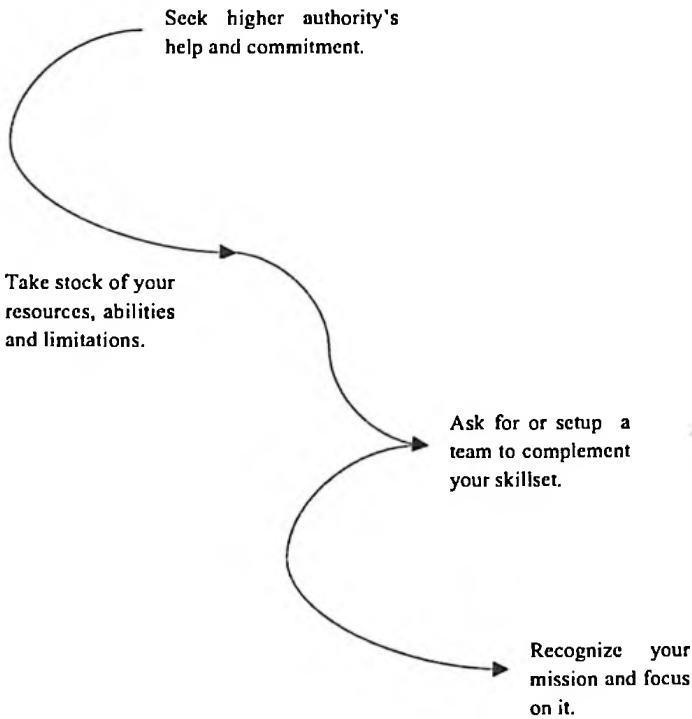
First, he asked God to expand his breast and make his task easy.

Next, he assessed his personal limitation and asked God to remove that limitation, for a mission-related purpose, to ensure that his audience understood his message.

Then, he asked for a teammate to complement him in his area of personal limitation, and to strengthen him in his effort.

Lastly, he recognized that his core objective, indeed his mission, was to praise and remember Allah.

One Interpretation of the Mosaic Leadership Model



The story of Moses and Aaron, even in this brief discourse, offers us valuable lessons in leadership and the art of working together. In these lessons, we discover the scriptural origins of present-day concepts in organizational behavior, whose understanding and practice will enhance our ability to perform well and achieve satisfaction, God Willing.

But wait. Moses had God on his side. He spoke to him, He endowed him with miraculous power, He advised him on how to proceed at critical moments. Can ordinary mortals emulate someone with that degree of superiority over them?

The answer depends on whether our faith is a noun or a verb, whether the faith we may wear on our sleeve transposes to what Schreiber, et al. describe as "faithing." "... Faithing implies faith in action, or faith achieved through action."[107] Being on a diet is not the same as dieting, as Schreiber et al. declare.

While God may not speak to ordinary mortals in the same manner as He did to Moses, nor may He endow them with similar miraculous powers, He does guide them and strengthens them when they put

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[107] Mordecai Schreiber, Iqbal Unus, Ian Case Punnett. *How Millennials Can Lead Us Out of the Mess We're In, A Jew, A Muslim, and a Christian share lessons from the life of Moses*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, Pg. 59

their faith in Him into actions that reflect obedience and submission due to Him. When faith turns to "faithing," ordinary mortals can and do achieve extraordinary results.

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The life of Moses offers other moral, spiritual, and practical guidance to aspiring and proven leaders and managers. Scriptural texts are best studied seeking answers to questions because their fundamental purpose is to guide the seeker. Leaders and managers will be well advised to study the life of Moses with such questions in mind as they may relate to their own experiences and challenges. Jews, Christians, and Muslims will not be disappointed in the wisdom and insight they gain toward fulfillment and success in their personal and professional lives when they look at a situation through the Moses lens.[108]

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[108] Mordecai Schreiber, Iqbal Unus, Ian Case Punnett. *How Millennials Can Lead Us Out of the Mess We're In, A Jew, A Muslim, and a Christian share lessons from the life of Moses*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, Pg. 130

APPENDIX

Conflict Management–The SALAM Model[109]

The English acronym SALAM is a transliterated version of the corresponding Islamic terms. I want to use the letters of SALAM to refer to a process of dealing with conflict. The SALAM model points to a systematic way of approaching the conflict and moving toward a fair resolution, assuming of course that all parties to the conflict want to reach a fair conclusion. The first letter **S** stands for **stating** the conflicting view. We should not assume that we already know what the nature or content of the conflict is. Let it be stated what it is that we are in conflict about. The Qur'an advises us not to act on what we do not know:

> In sura *Al Isra*: *"And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be inquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)."* [17:36]
>
> In sura Al Najm: *"But they have no knowledge therein. They follow nothing but*

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[109] Reproduced from *The Islamic Workplace: Enabling Muslims and Non-Muslims To Work More Effectively and Harmoniously Together* / Conflict Management–The SALAM Model - *Posted on April 28, 2007 /Author:* Dr. Iqbal Unus

conjecture; and conjecture avails nothing against the truth." [53:28]

Once what is in conflict is clearly stated – without agreement or disagreement, it is possible to relate it to the conflicting parties' purposes. This will establish what is at stake and how critical the disagreement is. Some conflict might be resolved just by stating the parameters of conflict clearly, because one party or the other might find that it can live with the situation without trying to change it.

Therefore, **S** stands for stating the conflicting view.

The second letter **A** stands for **agreeing** that a conflict exists, again without making any judgment.

At this stage, we must detach issues from personalities. One way to do that is, when possible, let each side state the other side's position as fairly as it can. This enables them both to focus on issues, not persons.

The third letter **L** stands for **listening** for and **learning** the difference. Of course, that is the tough part.

Most of the time, we listen not to learn but to respond when our turn comes. Here we must turn to the essence of the Islamic principles of *shura*, by focusing on the issues. The two parties should move to a higher level by consulting with one another on how to attack the problem between them. Through this exercise of *shura*, they direct their mutual resources of creativity, experience, wisdom, etc. to attack the problem, not one another.

As far as *shura* is concerned, there is probably no other Islamic concept that is talked about as much as, and

practiced as little as, *shura*. Therefore, I will not spend more time discussing what *shura* is.

However, within the context of avoiding conflict, one must stress the proactive nature of *shura*. When the Prophet received the news about Abu Sufyan's caravan before the Battle of Badr, he consulted the members of his expedition. Sayiddina Abu Bakr and Sayyidina Umar spoke and then al Miqdad ibn 'Amr spoke, and then there was a long silence. The Prophet (saw) asked for advice. It seemed he was anxious to hear the Ansar's view because he had made a pledge with at al `Aqabah.

Then Sa'd ibn Mua'dh, their leaders, addressed the Prophet (saw) asking the Prophet (saw) if he was seeking to hear their views, and the Prophet (saw) confirmed that indeed he was. This anecdote stresses the pro-active nature of *shura*, the idea the one has to invite and seek *shura*, not simply engage in it because it is forced by circumstances.

Of course, at this stage, we must examine the guidelines of *Sharia* with respect to the issues at hand. This should also be a mutual effort, to make the *Sharia* – in a sense – an unbiased arbitrator.

The fourth letter **A** stands for **advising** one another. This is a stage where compromises begin to take shape. We advise one another in the Islamic manner of *naseeha*, recognizing that the advisor is not always right. Two things are important here.

First: we move to common ground by proposing action that meets the principal needs of the other party while enabling us to reach our goals.

Second: we offer to help carry out whatever is agreed upon. Again, we are talking about a proactive mode of behavior. It requires a continual monitoring of actions and prompt evaluative response to them.

We all know the very famous hadith of the Prophet (saw) related by Muslim on the authority of Abu Ruqayya Tamim ibn Aus ad-Dari (ra): The Prophet (saw) said: "Religion is good advice." We said: "To whom?" He said: "To Allah and His Book, and His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk."

We see that the Prophet (saw) extended the principle of *naseeha* to everyone from the top to the bottom, from the leaders to the common folks. Thus, the giving or receiving of *naseeha* is not restricted to one group or another, but is a general operational principle, especially when we study this hadith with the other famous one: *A believer is a mirror to his brother.*

The last letter **M** stands for **minimizing** areas of disagreement that could lead to aggression or withdrawal.

We do not want the other party to become an aggressor because they did not get what they wanted. In most situations, we also do not want the other party to withdraw from us. In most situations, this will be only a short-lived resolution of the conflict, until the other party feels strong enough to challenge the resolution.

Therefore, we want to seek agreement in as many aspects of the conflict as possible, minimizing those aspects in which either party has to yield its position. We recognize that conflict is unavoidable; and that it is even desirable to have functional and occasional conflict.

Remember, when two people always agree with one another, one of them is redundant.

For a fuller discussion of conflict management from an Islamic perspective, see the article on *Conflict Management in Psychology and Islam: Understand the relationship between them, and understand the psychology based on the view of Islam.*[110]

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110 http://spychology-of-islam.blogspot.com/2012/02/conflict-management.html

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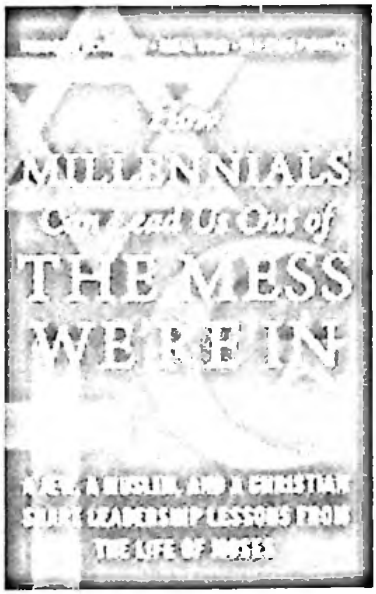

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Your Thoughts

Your Thoughts

Intersection

Moses and Pharaoh
in the Bible, Qur'an and History
Maurice Bucaille · 2008

From the Introduction

The Holy Scriptures of the three monotheistic religions relate events which happened after Abraham instituted the belief in one unique God. These events, whose main aspects are shared by the Bible and the Qur'an, have a special significance when they concern the period of Moses, who, as an apostle of Monotheism, rose up against the despotic authority of "Pharaoh," a symbol of polytheism and an oppressor of the Hebrews. Thus, their history in Egypt, narrated by the Holy Scriptures, is the topic which reveals the greatest number of aspects shared by the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities.